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ELEGY OF ERARD MAC COISE, CHIEF CHRONICLER OF THE
GAELS, PRONOUNCED OVER THE TOMB OF FERGAL
O'RUAIRC, CHIEF OF BREFNY, AT CLONMACNOISE.

BY JOHN O'DONOVAN, LL. D.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.—The following Elegy, now translated for the first time, has been copied from an Irish MS., on paper, of a small quarto size, in the handwriting of Maurice Newby, 1715, formerly the property of Mr. Edward O'Reilly, of Harold's-cross, author of the "Irish-English Dictionary," and compiler of the descriptive "Catalogue of Irish Writers," which was published by the Hiberno-Celtic Society. The MS. alluded to, now in the possession of George Smith, Esq., contains several other poems, with some articles in prose. Amongst the former is to be found the Ode addressed by John O'Mulconry, of Ardchoill, in the county of Clare, to Brian na Murtha O'Ruairc, chief of West Brefny, or the county of Leitrim, accompanied by an interlined gloss by Teige O'Rody, Esq., of Crossfield, in the county of Leitrim. The greater portion of the MS. is taken up with poems addressed to or composed by O'Rody; and the scribe, Maurice Newby, whose name, and the date, 1715, appear in the MS., has throughout given proof of his abilities as a Latin and Irish scholar. This MS. was, with others, purchased by Myles John O'Reilly, Esq., of the Heath House, in the Queen's County, who has since sold it to Mr. Smith.

The translation is strictly literal, and no deviation from the original has been ventured upon, except where intelligibility required it.

Of the merit of the original poem the reader can form his own unbiassed judgment. The pathetic force with which the bard, prostrate on the tomb of his chieftain and patron, pours forth his griefs for the loss he and his country had sustained, is remarkably original and striking.

The context of the Elegy generally, besides the allusion to facts and names of historic records which it contains, would appear to give a satisfactory internal evidence of the time at which it was composed, and it would be, in this respect, highly curious as a specimen of the language and composition of an Irish poet of the eleventh century. But two very great difficulties present themselves in connexion with this Elegy. It would appear that there were two poets named Erard or Urard Mac Coise, one who, according to the Annals of Tighernach, died (*mortuus est*) in the year 990; the other, who, according to the Annals of the Four Masters, died in the year 1023.

But the only Fergal O'Ruairc that we find about this period was a king of Connaught, who was, according to the Annals of Ulster, slain by Domhnall, son of Conghalach, Lord of Bregia and Cnodhbha, in the year 965. The first Urard Mac Coise, who died at Clonmacnoise in 990, might have been the author of an elegy for this Fergal; but then he is made to say—

“Subac íol ġ-Cuinn d'ér ġruian,
Do éuitim a nġlac Ċluana tapb.”

“Joyful is the race of Conn, after
Brian's fall in the conflict at Clontarf.”

Brian Boromhe fell in this battle in the year 1014 (no date is more certain), so that the author of this Elegy either wrote or pretended to have written immediately after the fall of Brian in the Battle of Clontarf. Now it looks strange enough that the Four Masters take no notice of the Urard Mac Coise who died, according to Tighernach, in 990, they evidently having believed that there was only one poet of the name, viz., he who was secretary to King Malachy II., and died in the year 1023.

If the Four Masters be correct, it is not improbable that the passage in the Annals of Tighernach, at the year 990, should stand thus:—

“A. D. 990. Upapb Mac Coirpe, ppmécep ġaeòil in penitentia moratus est a ġ-Cluain mic Noip.”

“A. D. 990. Urard Mac Coisse, chief poet of Erin, lived in penitence at Clonmacnoise.”

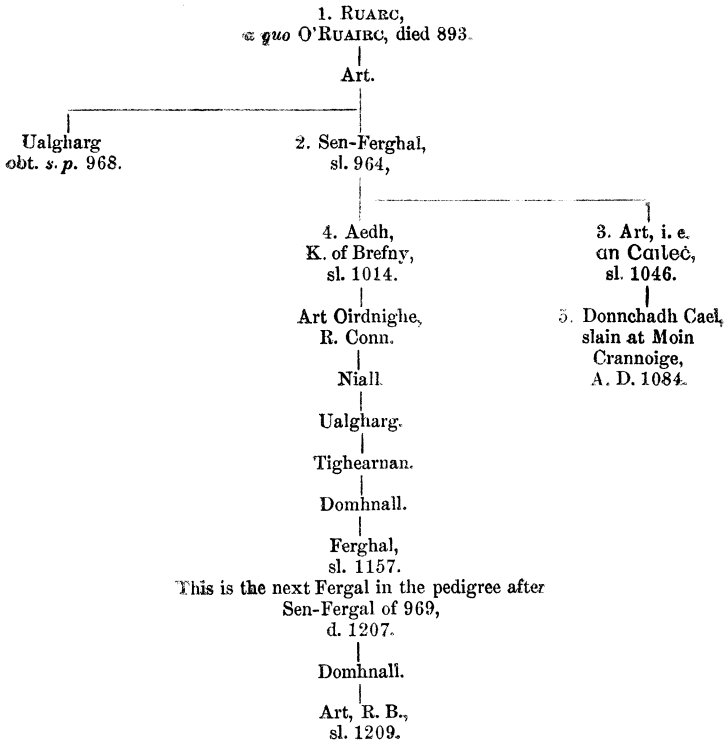
Then the passage in the Four Masters will square with it very well:—

“A. D. 1023. Epapb Mac Coirpe, ápbcpomícúde na n-ġaeòeal d'éc hı Cluain mic Nóip iap n-déġbétaró.”

“A. D. 1023. Erard Mac Coisse, chief chronicler of the Gaels, died at Clonmacnoise, after a good life.”

Now, assuming that there was but one poet of this name, we have still a further difficulty to contend with, and which is much more formidable, namely, that no Fergal O'Ruairc is to be found in the Irish annals or pedigrees at the period to which this Elegy makes so pointed an allusion. In the pedigree of O'Ruairc, as given in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote, and by Duaid Mac Fírbis, p. 208 of his large genealogical work, it is stated that Art, who was the only son of Ruairc, had two sons, Ualgharg, who died without issue, and Sen-Fergal, King of Connaught, the greatest

champion that appeared in the world since the time of Hector and Achilles. That Sen-Fergal had two sons, Aedh, slain by Tadhg an eicéil, King of Connaught, 1014, and Art, King of Connaught, commonly called the *Cailech*, i. e. the Cock, who was slain in 1046. The pedigree stands thus:—



It is very clear from these MSS., which are rather copious in their details of the pedigree of O'Ruairc, that there was no Fergal in the family who lived immediately after the fall of Brian Borumha in the battle of Clontarf, and that Sen-Ferghal was so called either from his great age, or by posterity.¹ It should, however, be remarked that the Annals of Clonmacnoise, as translated by Connell Mac Geoghagan, in 1627, contain the following passage:—

¹ Why was this Fergal called SEN-Fergal, as it does not appear that he had a son, Fergal Og? This looks strange enough, for no Fergal is mentioned in the pedigree of the

O'Ruaircs till the year 1157. The first Fergal was probably called *Sen* by posterity, as he was the oldest of the name to be found in the pedigree.

“The O’Neals forsooke King Bryan in this battle [of Clontarf], and so did all Connought, except Fferrall O’Royreck and Teige O’Kelly, Prince of Imaine.”

This passage, however, is not to be found in any other Irish annals. But it might be argued that the Annals of Tighernach are defective at this period, and that the other Annals are later compilations, more or less defective.

The only theory, therefore, which could be resorted to to reconcile this poem to history, is to assume that there was but one Urard Mac Coise, namely, he who was secretary to Malachy II.; that, as the Fergal O’Ruairc who was slain A. D. 964 was called Sean-Ferghal, i. e. the old Ferghal, there would appear to have been another called Fergal óg, or Fergal the younger, who fought at Clontarf, and died before the year 1023.

If this was not the fact (and it is almost certain that it was not), this Elegy must have been interpolated by some Irish bard, who believed, or thought to make others believe, that Fergal O’Rourke, for whom it was composed, flourished after the fall of Brian in the battle of Clontarf, and was buried at Clonmacnoise immediately after the battle of Clontarf, or at least before the year 1023, when Erard Mac Coisse died.

The reader will find a curious legendary notice of Urard Mac Coise in Dr. Todd’s Notes to the Irish “Nennius,” p. 209. The following curious passage relating to him is found in Mac Geoghegan’s translation of the Annals of Clonmacnoise, under the year 983 (*recte* 990, according to Tighernach):—

“Erard Mac Coysie, chief poet of King Moyleseaghlyn, and all Ireland, died in Clonvicknose very penitently.

“This man, for his devotion to God and St. Quæran, had his residence in Clonvicknose, to the end he might be neer the Church dayly to hear mass; and upon a night there appeared an Angel unto him, that reprehended him for dwelling so neer the place, and told him that the paces of his Journey coming and going to hear Mass dayly would be measured by God, and according yeald him recompence for his pains, and from thence foorth Mac Coyssie remouved his house a good distance from Clonvicknose to a place among Boggs to this day called y^e place of Mac Coyssie’s house, from whence he did dayly use to repair to Clonvicknose to hear Masse, as he was warned before by the Angle.

“Before Mac Coyssie fell to these devotions King Moyleseaghlyn of his great bounty of Learning and Learned-men bestowed the revenewes of the Crown of Ireland for one year upon Mac Coyssie, who enjoyed it accordingly, and at the years end when the King would have the said revenewes to himself Mac Coyssie said that he would never suffer the King from thence foorth to have any part of the Royalties or profitts, but would keep all to himself, whether the King would or no, or loose his life in defence thereof: Whereupon the King challenged Mac Coyssie to fight a

Horsback which Mac Coyssie willingly consented to do though he knew himself unable to resist the Valourous hand of King Moyleseaghlyn, who was generally Coumpted the best horseman in these parts of Europe, for king Moyleseaghlyn's delight was to ride a horse that was never broken, handled or ridden untill the age of seven years, which he would so exactly ride as any other man wou'd ride and tame an old and Gentle Horse. Notwithstanding all Mac Coyssie was of such hope that the king of his favour of Poetry and Learning wou'd never draw his blood, which did embolden and encourage him to Combatt with the king, and being a' horseback Mac Coyssie well provided with horse and armour and the King only wth a good horse a staff without a head, fell eagerly to encounter Mac Coyssie [who was] desirous to kill the king, to the end he might enjoy the Revenewes without Contradiction; the King cunningly defended himself with nimble avoidings and turnings of his horse, fearing to hurt Mac Coyssie, untill at last wth his skillfulness and good horsemanship he vanquished Mac Coyssie and enjoyed his kingdom and revenews ever after, untill Bryan Borrowe and his Munstermen tooke the same from him."

With respect to the orthography, it is evident that it was modernized by the scribe Maurice Newby, or some previous transcriber of the seventeenth century; but I have thought it right to give the spelling exactly as I found it, as no vellum or ancient copy of the Elegy has yet turned up. I also suspect that scribes have substituted some modern words and phrases for the more ancient language of the original poet; but I would not undertake to point out to what extent this has been done.

To conclude these few remarks, it is right that I should state that it has been my opinion for some years that this poem and the entry above alluded to about Fferrall O'Roirck, in the Annals of Clonmacnoise, were forged for the O'Rourke family since the erection of their tomb at Clonmacnoise, near the greater Cloittheach or Round Tower, and that they caused the Annals and Registry of Clonmacnoise to be interpolated, and this poem to be forged about the same period, to add to the antiquity of their connexion with Clonmacnoise. It has been also my opinion that this poem, or rather a poem of which it is an imitation, was originally composed for Malachy II., monarch of all Ireland, by his secretary, Erard Mac Coisë, and that the name of Malsechlainn was everywhere left out by the forger. Forgeries of this kind are to be found in every nation in Europe; and we have seen specimens of such in Ireland in our own times.

That the Registry of Clonmacnoise, as translated for Sir James Ware by Duald Mac Firbis, was interpolated for the family of O'Ruairc, has been already suggested by Dr. Petrie in his admirable work on the Round Towers of Ireland, where, p. 386, the following extract is quoted from that Registry from the autograph of Mac Firbis, now preserved in the Library of the British Museum, Cod. Clarend., No. 51, 4796:—

“And the same O’Ruairc [Fergal] of his devotion towards the Church, undertooke to repair those churches and keep them in reparation during his life upon his own charges, and to make a causey or Togher from the place called Cruan na Feadh to Iubhar Chonaire, and from Iubhar [Chonaire] to the Loch; and the said Fergal did perform it together with all other promises that he made to Cluain, and the repaying of that number of chappells or cells, and the making of that causey or Togher, and hath for a monument built a small steep castle or steeple, commonly called in Irish *Claicthough* [Clocicthech, *Clocarium*, *Clochere*, or belfry], in Cluain, as a memorial of his own part of that Cemetary: and the said Fergal hath made all those cells before specified in mortmain for him and his heirs to Cluain; and thus was the sepulture of the O’Ruairks bought.”

See also p. 263 of the same work, where this Registry is again quoted, and also “Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many,” Pedigree of O’Kelly.

But whoever wrote this poem originally, or whenever it was interpolated, it is a specimen of an ancient Irish elegy, valuable, if not for correct chronology, at least for exhibiting a fair representation of Irish thought, feeling, and sympathy at an early period.

Mac Pherson made elegies of this description, orally preserved in Ireland and Scotland, the groundwork of his “Songs of Selma,” but he has borrowed too many conceptions and images from Homer and the Old Testament :—

“Sweet are thy murmurs, O stream, but more sweet is the voice I hear. It is the voice of Alpin, the son of song, mourning for the dead! Bent is his head of age, and red his tearful eye. Alpin, thou son of song, why alone on the silent hill? Why complainest thou, as a blast in the wood, as a wave on the lonely shore? My tears, O Ryno! are for the dead; my voice for those who have passed away.”

The metre of this Elegy is remarkably regular, which shows that it is a studied piece of composition, and not the extemporaneous effusion of any poet. The generality of Irish elegies are not so regular in their metre, but correspond with Horace’s notice of such compositions :—

“Versibus impariter junctis querimonia primum,
Post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.
Quis tamen exiguos elegos emisit auctor,
Grammatici certant, et adhuc sub judice lis est.”
De Art. Poet., 75.

I shall, I trust, soon again return to this subject, which is at present much neglected by our literary antiquaries. It forms the most striking feature of our ancient Irish literature. I now append the Elegy, accompanied by a close literal translation.—J. O’D.

brónaé ollam d'éir a ríḡ,
 Páiríor naé b'pailim ro'n b'earc!
 Míre ar marḡain d'éir Uí Ruairc!
 Mairḡ, a Ćríorc, do pmuain an b'eaé!

Cr'éad naé beinn-re brónaé boét,
 Ír 'Eire anoét ar ndul do díét,
 Tar éir ríḡ Teampa na d'p'eaé,
 Naé ar eiríḡ neaé um ní.

Cruaéa c'roḡearḡ cloinne Chuinn
 beaḡ buḡearc a puim aḡ ríḡ,
 T're beir d' P'earḡal púm-ra aḡ Cluain,
 'S na beirc bróin do éuaíḡ rí.

Uir'neaé Míde, Cnóḡba ír Colc,
 brónaé 'ran porc a mbíḡ Níall,
 Clactḡa ír Teamair na ríḡ
 Páiríor naé maircann a rḡiam.

brónaé árḡ-ḡoirc Inre Páil
 D'éir P'hearḡail, do éráíḡ mo éorp,
 ḡér b'é m'ionad uét an ríḡ,
 A ḡCluain ír beaḡ mo b'píḡe anoét.

Aoibinn duit, a Cluain mic Nóir,
 An tairḡe dír a t'á p'ad éorp,
 Círo'e éigear Inre Páil,
 P'earḡal do éleaét cáin do éur.

An t-ór beaḡ ro por a leaét,
 Do leaḡaḡ p'eaétpor a re
 An ḡrian mar p'eaé ar aniar
 Do b' ionann niam do 'r do'n ḡréin.

Mo leabuir-pí ír ceap'uil éruaíḡ,
 Mairḡ, a Ćríorc do éuaíḡ 'na p'ailb!
 Leac na ríḡḡruíḡe atá púm,
 Pa b'pail P'earḡal, pún ḡan meing.

Ceileab'paḡ duit, h-uí Ruairc,
 Ní d' im'éaét uair aét do p'ea,
 biaḡ pem pé ao éaoinead a ḡ-Cluain,
 Ní paéad airce uaiḡ n'ea éear.

Míre re ré t'ráé ḡan biaḡ,
 Am' luíḡe ar do lia Uí Ruairc!
 Mo éroiḡe-pí ír lom ḡur loirḡ,
 A P'hearḡail do éoirḡ a ḡ-Cluan.

Raéfuio mé uo'n ciḡ-ri ríor
 Uí Maoilḡiarain na ḡ éfor ḡo fáil,
 Dá ríor an léiḡpeaḡ mé arṡeaḡ,
 Map naḡ léiḡṡear neaḡ um neoin.

Sopuiḡ ðuit, a Phearḡail féil,
 A ríor ar naḡ beirṡí béim a ḡeioio,
 Dó coim-maṡ ní fácar ríamh
 Dḡe do ríreap ríar ip ríoir.

Míre mac Coipe, ó Chluain,
 Fáda cluinṡear m'uail ar fáearṡ,
 bím map reabac déir a éan
 Aḡ šul ḡo ḡéar ar do leaḡṡ.

bím map eilḡ déir a laoiḡ,
 Ar fáearṡ Phearḡail fá maioṡ móir,
 Dál ḡCair, ḡioḡ ruḡaḡ an rluagḡ,
 Ní fáil aca aḡṡ tuar bróim.

Subaḡ ríol ḡCuinn tap éir ḡríam
 Dó éuitim a n-ḡliaḡ Cluana tapḡ,
 Dubaḡ anoḡṡ aṡá mé,
 Ní fáil oim aḡṡ ḡné an maipḡ !

Fearḡal mac Airṡ an fáilṡ réio
 Níor éir neaḡ po'n nḡréim ríamh,
 Déir a ḡeug ar ḡaná, monuar !
 Oḡan ! oḡh ! ip ríuaḡ an ḡníomh.

Conall, Eoḡan, eaḡḡ re eaḡḡ,
 Eoḡaḡ aḡur Aoḡ O'Néill,
 Dío móir fáarar ip Mac Liaḡ
 'O na ríiaḡaib do bí ḡár réir.
 Tuḡ Fearḡal ḡaíra níora mó,
 Dá upḡuil no ḡó do rípréio.

Luaḡ ríuḡaib ḡaí-ḡa a n-aḡclíiaḡ
 Tuḡ Conḡalaḡ, níor ciall ḡann.
 Lán reṡeaḡ d' airḡeaḡ ip d'ór,
 Aḡḡal an rṡór, cam na nḡall,
 Tuḡ Fearḡal ḡaíra a n-ḡar Ruaiḡ
 Dá upḡail a bḡaib mé anḡ.

Maoilreacḡluinn, Taḡḡ an eic ḡil,
 Fáir ríin ar naḡ beirṡí béim,
 Laiḡniḡ ip Dál ḡCair na ḡ-euaḡ,
 Dḡér maṡ monuar ré ḡaḡ cléir.
 Dó b'fearr Fearḡal re ḡaḡ ḡáimh
 Na ríol 'Aḡaíin re a mnáib fáim.

Dá mað fíon Sionainn go rál,
Dá Mað aipeab mað rán Réim,
Da mað óp Sliab an iapainn þuap
Do beapað O'Ruairc do éleir.

Čearða an eineað iap n-a ðul,
Miðib dam-þa ðul a ġ-eré,
Nír imēġ Pearġal O'Ruairc,
Ģo puġ buað an beaġa cé,

'O nać maipeann pearġa an þlaić,
'S mé an tpuagán do ćaīć a lonn,
A ġCluain Čhiapáin mīć an tpaoir,
Þiaīð mīpe ġać laoi þa þrón.

Mournful is the Ollav¹ after his King.
Alas, that I am not in the grave!
That I should survive O'Ruairc,
O Christ, is a cruel destiny!²

Must I not be sad and miserable
When Erin to-night is falling to decay,
Deprived of the King of Temur³ of tribes
Who never refused⁴ aught to any.

Croghan,⁵ warlike seat of Conn's sons,
Small henceforward will be her kingly sway,
For Fergal lies under me at Cluain:
She has sunk into gloomy sorrow.

¹ *Olav*, Ollav, a chief poet.

² *Cruel destiny*.—Literally, a cruel judgment. This shows the distracted state of the poet's mind:—

"Ferus omnia Jupiter Argos
Transtulit."

Modern elegy writers have been still more extravagant in accusing death or fate, or *causa secunda*, of injustice. Dineley's notice of the Irish *keeners*, lately printed in our "Transactions," has a parallel in the following lines of Horace:—

"Ut qui conducti plorant in funere, dicunt,
Et faciunt propē plura dolentibus ex
animo."

³ *King of Temur*.—This looks as if this Elegy was really intended for Malachy II., King of Temur or Tara, and monarch of Ireland, as Fergal O'Ruairc had no claim whatever to that designation. But it must be confessed that the Irish Ollavs were very irregular in the bestowal of titles upon their chieftains; for they would call a man King

of Tara when he was only fit to be monarch of Ireland, according to the opinion of the eulogist.

⁴ *Who never refused*.—"Qui nunquam negavit aliquid alicui," by which the poet means that O'Ruairc was a man of unbounded generosity. The poet Mangan, who turned this Elegy into blank verse in the year 1831, rendered this quatrain as follows:—

"Why should I not be overborne with anguish!

Erin to-night is drooping in decay,
For lost to her is Temur's King of tribes,
Whose bounty flowed for all in lavish
streams!"

⁵ *Croghan*.—Čpuacām, now Rathcroghan, the Royal Palace of Connaught. The poet here seems to assume that the province of Connaught took its name from the race of Conn of the Hundred Battles, who were the dominant family of that province in MacCoise's time. It was called Olnegmacht in the time of the Fírbolgs, which is probably the *Nagnata* of Ptolemy. The Irish Shana-

Uisnech¹ of Meath, Cnodbha² and Colt,³
 Are sorrowful with the fort of Niall,⁴
 Tlachtgha,⁵ and Temur⁶ of Kings,—
 Alas! the death of [Fergal] their ornament.⁷

Mournful are the chief forts of Inisfail⁸
 After Fergal, which wastes my frame,
 And though my station was the King's bosom,
 In Cluain small is my strength to-night.

Happy for thee, O Cluain-mic-Nois,
 This treasure of gold which is under thy sod,
 The treasure of the poets of Inis-Fail,
 Fergal, who was used to impose tribute.

This red gold⁹ upon his tomb,
 Which was some time since melted upon it,
 Like the sun, as he looks from the west,
 Had a brilliancy like to that sun.

My bed is a hard couch—
 Miserable, O Christ, is the possessor!
 The Flag of the Kings¹⁰ is under me,
 Under which lies Fergal my beloved without stain.

chies inform us that the people were so called from their great propensity to drinking! It were to be wished that they had added the name and quality of the liquor to which the primitive Trans-Shannonites, or Firbolgic Nagnatæ, were addicted. We must suppose that it was mead or metheglin, as they had no whiskey at this early period.

¹ *Uisneach*.—A celebrated hill in West-meath, considered the *meditullium* of Ireland. A stone on the top of this hill, called anciently *Catinchi*, now the Cat-stone of Uisneach, was the landmark, boundary-stone, or terminus, at which the different provinces met in ancient times, before the formation of Meath as mensal lands for the monarchy.

² *Cnodbha*.—Now Knowth, in the parish of Monkstown, in Meath, famous for its sepulchral tumulus, which was opened and ransacked by the Norsemen so early as the year 862—"Quod antea nunquam factum est."—*Ann. Ult.*

³ *Colt*.—A famous place in East-Meath, but not yet satisfactorily identified. It is situated a considerable distance to the south of the river Boyne, and between it and the river Liffey.

⁴ *Fort of Niall*.—Probably Cletty, on the Boyne.

⁵ *Tlachtgha*.—Now a fort on the hill of Ward, near Athboy, in Meath.

⁶ *Temur of Kings*.—The royal palace of Tara, in Meath. From the particular mention of these most remarkable places in the ancient Meath, to which Fergal O'Ruairc had no claim, one would feel inclined to suspect that this Elegy was really meant for Malachy II.

⁷ *Their ornament*.—This would apply much better to Malachy II. than to Fergal O'Ruairc.

⁸ *Inisfail*.—A name for Ireland, meaning the island of destiny.

⁹ *Red gold*.—This expression is to be frequently met in Irish poems. Natural gold is yellow, gold mixed with copper is red, but when with silver it is *bán-óir*, pale gold. From this allusion it would appear that the tomb-stones of the great chieftains at Clonmacnoise were ornamented with gold, that is, that their crosses and letters were inlaid with gold.

¹⁰ *Flag of the Kings*.—This would apply better to the tomb of Malachy II., and, in my opinion, this line was transferred from his funeral eulogium to that of Fergal O'Ruairc by a forger who lived many centuries later than either. Of the kind of forgeries made in O'Ruairc's country, the "Book of Fenagh" affords very striking specimens, as I shall show in a future paper on the "Book of Fenagh."

Farewell to thee, O'Ruairc,
 I leave thee but for a time—
 I shall be, during my life, lamenting thee at Cluain;
 I will not depart from it north or south.

I am six *traths*¹ without food;
 Prostrate on thy tomb, O'Ruairc,
 My heart it severely burnt—
 O Fergal, thy visit to Cluain!

I will go to this house below
 Of O'Mulkieran² of Combs, soon
 To see if he will let me in
 Where none are admitted in the evening.

Farewell to thee, generous Fergal,
 O hero not wont to receive wounds in battle,
 Thy peer in goodness I have never seen,
 Although I have travelled east and west.

I am Mac Coise: from Cluain
 Far is my wailing heard on thy grave;
 I am like the hawk³ after its young,
 Weeping bitterly on thy tomb.

I am like the doe⁴ after her fawn,
 On the tomb of Fergal, dissolved in grief:
 The Dal Cais,⁵ though exulting their host,
 Have but foreboding of sorrow.

Joyful are the Race of Conn, after Brian's
 Fall in the Battle of Cluain-tarbh;⁶
 But sorrowful to-night am I,
 I have but the aspect of a corpse.

¹ *Traths*.—The word *trath* generally means twenty-four hours in correct old Irish MSS., but in modern times it is applied to the hours, or vespers, and to *meal-tides*. "*Mealtide* is the time of eating, as noone-meale or even-meale, for which wee use our borrowed French words of dinner and supper."—*Verstegan*.

² *O'Mulkieran*.—Some ecclesiastical family living at Clonmacnoise, whom the poet wished to satirize in this quatrain.

³ *The hawk*.—The grief of the hawk robbed of its young was well known to falconers.

⁴ *The doe*.—The intense grief of the doe after the loss of her fawn is proverbial; but these similes are not very happily applied by Mac Coise or his imitator. For these similes to hold good and chastely correct, the poet should have been the mother of O'Ruairc.

⁵ *The Dal Cais*.—If this line be genuine, it would show that this elegy was not com-

posed for Fergal O'Ruairc, who was slain in 964. The allusion here is evidently to the triumph of the Dal Cais, or people of Thomond, after the battle of Clontarf. What sorrow it was the poet holds out as foreboded to them it is not easy to see, unless that he was far-seeing enough to foretell the destruction of the Irish monarchy in consequence of their usurpation.

⁶ *Battle of Cluain-tarbh (Clontarf)*.—Every forgery recoils upon itself! This line proves to a demonstration that this Elegy could not have been composed for Fergal O'Ruairc, who was slain in 964, i. e. fifty years before this battle. The race of Conn were glad that the usurper Brian Borumha had fallen in the battle of Clontarf. But surely no bard ever delivered this sentiment in a lamentation over the grave of Fergal O'Ruairc, who was slain in 964! For if we

Fergal, son of Art¹ of the smooth hair,
 No one under the sun did he ever refuse,
 After all he gave for poetry, alas!
 Alas! alas! pitiful the deed.²

Conall, Eoghan,³ both together,
 Eochaidh,⁴ and Aedh O'Neill,⁵
 Though much I received with Mac Liag,⁶
 From those chiefs who obeyed us,
 Fergal gave me more,
 Twice the measure, and twice more of wealth.

The price of Trowse⁷ to me in Dublin,
 Gave Congalach of generous mind.
 The full of a hide of silver and gold,
 Vast the store, the tribute of the Galls,
 Fergal gave me at Eas Ruaidh,⁸
 Twice the sum I received there.

Maelsechlainn⁹ and Tadhg of the white steed,¹⁰
 Men who received no wounds in battle;

should even suppose that the Irish of his time were, like the Red Indians of North America, in the habit of digging up the bones of their ancestors every seventh year for an encyclical period, to lament over them, we can hardly allow that they repeated this lamentation over the grave of Fergal for the seventh time after the year 1014.

¹ *Fergal, the son of Art.*—Mac Firbis, in his large genealogical work, has preserved a very curious quatrain, written by an ancient poet, in eulogy of this Art, the father of Fergal.

² *Pitiful the deed.*—This line is perfectly meaningless in this quatrain, as it stands at present; but if the poet had thrown more of the real fire of poetry and of the nature of sincere grief into his Elegy, he could make it perfectly intelligible, and pregnant with meaning. For example, if he had alluded to the real fate of Fergal O'Ruairc, his fall by the hand of Domhnall, son of Conghalach, Lord of Bregia, he might have well said or sung:—

Than Fergal, son of Art, of lasting fame,
 No man had ever gained a higher name
 Among the bards for hospitality;
 That such a man should fall by Congalach,
 The brutal tyrant of the men of Bregh,
 Must be a cause of never-ceasing grief
 To all the sons of song who shared his gifts.

³ *Conall and Eoghan.*—i. e. the chiefs of Tirconnell and Tirone.

⁴ *Eochaidh.*—He was Eochaidh, son of

Ardghal, King of Ulidia, or East Ulster, and is mentioned in the "Annals of the Four Masters" at the year 1001.

⁵ *Aedh O'Neill.*—He was Aedh, son of Domhnaill, King of Aileach, mentioned in the same Annals, at the years 1001, 1003. He was slain in 1003, in the twenty-ninth year of his age.

⁶ *Mac Liag.*—He was chief poet and secretary to Brian Borumha, and died in the year 1015.

⁷ *Trowse.*—This is the Braccæ of the classical writers, worn by the Irish from the early period, till they were forced to use the English dress. It is not easy to conjecture which of the several Conghalachs, who were contemporary with MacCoise, is here intended. Probably Congalach, monarch of Ireland, who succeeded in 944, and was slain by the Danes in 956.

⁸ *Eas Ruaidh.*—Now Assaroe, the Salmon-leap at Ballyshannon, on the Erne, in the county of Donegal.

⁹ *Maelseachlainn.*—i. e., Malachy II., who became monarch of Ireland in the year 980, and reigned till 1002, when he was dethroned by Brian Borumha, King of Munster, who reigned sole monarch of Ireland till he was slain in the battle of Clontarf, A.D. 1014, after which Maelseachlainn reigned as sole monarch till the year 1022, when he died.

¹⁰ *Tadhg an eich ghil.*—He was King of Connaught, and was slain in 1030. See "Annals of the Four Masters," at the years 1014, 1030.

The Leinster-men, and Dal Cais of goblets,
 Were indeed good to all the learned;
 But Fergal was better to each company of poets
 Than the race of Adam to their own wives.

Were the Shannon¹ wine down to the sea,
 And were the beauteous Magh Rein² of silver,
 Were the chilly Slieve an iarainn³ of gold,
 O'Ruairc would give them to the poets.

Hospitality disappeared after his departure,—
 Time for me to return to clay:
 Fergal O'Ruairc departed not
 Until he excelled the earthly world.⁴

Since no longer lives the chief,
 I am the wretched man who spent his store,
 In the Cluain of Chiaran, son of the artifex,
 I shall be daily under sorrow.

The following metrical translation of the Elegy is from the pen
 of the late Clarence Mangan, and has never before been published :—

The bard is mournful, for his King hath perished !
 Woe's me ! I should be in the grave beside him.
 Oh, Christ ! it is a dreary destiny,
 That I should live to see O'Rorke laid low !

Why should I not be overborne with anguish ?
 Erin, to-night, is drooping in decay ;
 For lost to her is Temor's King of Tribes,
 Whose bounty flowed for all in lavish streams !

¹ *The Shannon*.—It rises in O'Ruairc's country. If it were wine as far as Leim Chonchulainn, wine would be cheaper than milk in the province of Olnegmacht, or province of the great drinking !

² *Magh Rein*.—This was the southern or level part of the county of Leitrim, Mac Rannell's country.

³ *Sliabh an iarainn*.—i. e. the mountain of the iron, "ita dictus a ferri venis quibus abundat." If this mountain were gold, O'Ruairc could have well afforded to pay for poetical eulogia; but it is to be feared he did not possess the skill or the capital to work the iron mines with which it abounds, though, according to oral tradition, Goibhnen, the Tuatha De Danann smith, worked the mines of this mountain more than 2000 years before Fergal O'Ruairc was born. The mountain of Binbo, in the same neighbourhood, is believed traditionally by the Brefnians to con-

tain gold mines; and the following distich, which is constantly repeated, reminds them of its treasures :—*Ir raiððre beanna bó mÁ 'Eipe pá óó, i. e., Totá Hibernia bis ditior Benbo.*"

⁴ *Excelled the earthly world*.—*beata cé*. The Irish word *beata* is clearly cognate with the Latin *vita*, and *cé* with the Greek *γῆ, terra*. An old Irish quatrain, quoted by Duaid Mac Fírbis in his large Genealogical work, p. 208, speaks of the valour of Fergal O'Ruairc thus :—

O Ro gaeð Ecctóir, gan bñéig,
 Ir Gichill pé pa ní ru aipe,
 Ní ro márðað annrað ann,
 Amul ó riðóá nán Ruairc.

Since Hector was slain, without falsehood,
 And Achilles, once a pleasant king,
 No hero has been killed
 Like the royal fair grandson of Ruairc.

Croghan ! thou warlike dwelling of the sons
Of Con ! I see thee sunk in gloomy grief;
Narrowed will henceforth be thy regal sway,
Because thy King sleeps under me at Cluain !

Usna, renowned in Meath, and Colt and Cnova,
And Niall's city, all are sorrowful.
Alas ! for Tlactda and for princely Temor !
Their splendour is no more ! Oh, Innisfail !

Thy towns are mourning for the noble Fergal ;
And I, with sorrow-wasted frame—I, too,
Though once the bosom friend of Temor's King,
Droop feebly o'er his tomb to-night at Cluain !

Oh ! happy art thou, Clon-mac-noise ! that hast
This golden treasure buried in thy soil—
The treasure of the bards of Innisfail—
Fergal, to whom the land around paid tribute.

The glowing gold on this, his monument,
Melted upon it by the royal hand,
And glittering in the last beams of the sun,
As from the west he smiles, recalls to me
The bright and tranquil countenance of Fergal.
Hard is the couch I rest on ; and, O Christ !

Thrice wretched its possessor ! Underneath
This monument of kings reposes Fergal—
My loved, my noble Fergal. Fare-thee-well,
O'Rorke ! I leave thee for a little while :
Through life my tears shall flow for thee at Cluain !
Nor shall I wander from it, north or south.
Prostrate along thy tomb, O'Rorke, my King !
Six meal-tides am I without food or drink.

Thy visit into Cluain, O my Fergal !
Hath brought but desolation on my soul.
Now will I go down to this house below,
The house of O'Mulkeeran—if perchance
He may admit me—though beneath his roof
He suffers none to enter in the evening.

A long farewell to thee, O generous Fergal !
O hero ! rarely wounded in the strife,
Oft have I roamed by east and west, but never
Thy peer for goodness have I found, O Fergal !

I am Mac Cosy. Far around from Cluain
Are heard my wailings o'er thy grave, my King !

The mother hawk robbed of her little brood
Grieves not more bitterly than I for thee !

I am the lonely doe whose fawn has fled !
I melt in tears upon thy tomb, O Fergal !
Let the Dalcassian hosts rejoice in vain ;
Their joy is ominous of coming sorrow.

The sons of Con exult because the foe
Slew Brian in the battle, at Clontarf ;
But sad and desolate this night am I,
I wear the haggard aspect of a corpse !

The chiefs who sway Tirconnell and Tirone,
Eochy of Uladh, too, and Hugh O'Neill,
Were richly bounteous to Mac Liag and me ;
But Fergal's bounty far exceeded all.

And Congalach, he, too, was generous ! He
In Dublin gave me garments, gold and silver,
In heaped abundance from the stranger's tribute ;
But Fergal lavished on me, at Assroe,
Still greater wealth than Congalach, in Dublin.

Malachy, too, and Teige of the White Steed
(Chieftains invulnerable in the field),
The Lords of Leinster and of Thomond, famed
For goblets, shed their bounty on the poets ;
But Fergal's kindness to each sage excelled
The kindness of the husband to his wife.

If to the sea the Shannon flowed with wine—
Were all Moyrein a plain of richest silver—
Were Slieve-in-ierinn one vast mass of gold,
He on the poets would bestow them all.

But hospitality has vanished hence,
For he is dead. Then why should I survive ?
Yet did O'Rorke not perish till his name
And glory had outshone the living world !

Now, as no longer lives the chief and hero,
I mourn in gloomy mood, alone and destitute,
And buried in the solitude of Kieran,
Day after day shall witness to my sorrow !

The name Mac Coise is now unknown in Ireland, unless it lies
concealed under some Anglicised form,—such as Foote or Legge ;

but it still remains in Scotland in its true Gaelic form of *Mac Coise*, which is properly Anglicised Mac Cosh. The present erudite and profound Professor of Logics and Metaphysics in the Queen's College, Belfast, is of this Scottish sept, and I trust it will be hereafter proved that he is of the same race as our royal Irish poet, whose sept would appear to have removed to Scotland shortly after the death of their patron, King Malachy II., who died in 1022.

A dissertation on the number of Irish families who settled in Scotland since the ninth century would form a very curious subject for an essay, which I trust some of our contributors will soon undertake to write.
